

VISIT...

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Epic Comics Book # 54.95 \$6.00 US

CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER

Mark McLaurin
Jorge Zaffino

James Robert Smith
Mike Hoffman

Dwayne McDuffie
Kevin O'Neill

Mark Kneece
Scott Hampton

Philip Nutman
Bill Koeb



The Vault

Mark McLaurin

writer

Jorge Zaffino

artist

Julie Michel

color

Phil Felix

letterer

page 5

Diver's Hands

James Robert Smith

writer

Mike Hoffman

artist

page 10

Writer's Lament

Dwayne McDullie

writer

Kevin O'Neill

artist

James Novak

letterer

page 35

The Threshold

Mark Kneec

co-writer

Scott Hampton

co-writer/artist

Phil Felix

letterer

page 39

The Pleasures of Deception

Philip Nutman

writer

Bill Koeb

artist

Gaspar Saladino

letterer

page 47

front and end piece illustration by

Jon J. Muth

page 18 illustration by

Bill Sienkiewicz

page 34 illustration by

Mike Mignola

cover art by

Simon Bisley



FOREWORD

Horror comics, for too long a neglected and lonely corner of the night forest, have had good cause to cavort and howl at the moon of late; the past year has seen the overplayed riffs of the old E.C. comics put aside in favor of wickedly innovative and quality conscious projects in tune with both the potential of terror and the comics medium. These include Stephen Bissette's wonderfully unwholesome **Taboo**, **Tapping The Vein**, Eclipse Comics' excellent adaptations of Clive Barker's **Books of Blood**; Arcane's sincerely deranged **Fly In My Eye**; and Epic's own **Nightbreed**, an offshoot of Clive's new film of the same name. Rather than simply going for the sudden shock, the "GOTCHA" of the old school, each of these forums reflects and builds on the horror of *today*, a horror that delights in *disturbing* the reader—and that feeling of being unsettled is one that stays with you long after any mere jolt has faded away.

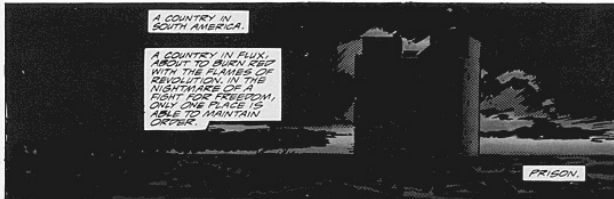
We like to think the particular downtown ticket you hold in your hands at this moment is also doing its part toward that end. In achieving that lowly goal, we are particularly fortunate in the caliber of talent with whom we are privileged to work, writers and artists who fully encompass the meaning of the word "creator": Helping us put together this puzzle: Working with the bold and powerful talents of Jorge Zaffino (whose art can also be seen gracing **Critical Mass**), Marvel managing editor Marc McLaurin takes us to "The Vault"; Scott Hampton, whose latest work appeared in "Pig Blood Blues" for **Tapping The Vein**, was good enough to introduce us to the tales of Mark Kneece, with whom Scott collaborated on "The Threshold"; fresh from getting under people's skins in **Taboo**, James Robert Smith and Mike Hoffman bring us "Divers Hands"; **Marshal Law** artist and co-creator Kevin O'Neill joins **Damage Control** writer Dwayne McDuffie for a "Writer's Lament"; and in "The Pleasures of Deception" longtime **Fangoria** contributor Phil Nutman (also appearing in the recent **Book of the Dead** anthology) teams up with artist Bill Koeb, soon to contribute art to **Interface**.

Overseeing this damnable bunch is Margaret Clark, who takes over the editorial reigns from myself as of this issue. Margaret is the one primarily responsible for the high standards set for many of Epic's books, including **Moonshadow**, **Akira**, the **Moebius Graphic Novels**, and **Havok & Wolverine: Meltdown**. She has graciously offered me this space to speak my longwinded piece, and she promises to continue to make hell a place you'll want to come back to again and again (as if you have any other choice with hell!).

These things said, I leave you in able hands—able to wield knives and power tools, able to wipe surfaces clean of fingerprints, able to tear flesh from bones. As for myself, I'm going to open my "going away" present—it's a small box, but with the way everyone's gathered around so eager to see me open it, it must be something special.

I wonder what's inside...?

Daniel Chichester
consulting editor



A COUNTRY IN
SOUTH AMERICA.

A COUNTRY IN FLUX,
ABOUT TO BURN RED
WITH THE FLAMES OF
REVOLUTION. IN THE
NIGHTMARE OF A
FIGHT FOR FREEDOM,
ONLY ONE PLACE IS
ABLE TO MAINTAIN
ORDER.

PRISON.



A BLIGHT ON THE LANDSCAPE, THIS
PARTICULAR PRISON HAS BECOME
A RIBIDLY SCREAMING SYMBOL
OF DESPAIR.

ITS OFFICIAL NAME IS YEARS LOST,
IN FAVOR OF ONE MORE DE-
SCRIPTIVE OF ITS SOUL...

...LA ENFERMIDAD.

IN CONTRAST TO THE SURROUND-
ING FIRES OF REVOLUTION, THE
DARKNESS OF LA ENFERMIDAD
IS PERFECTION.

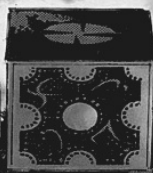
AND ARMANDO GARCIA
HAS ALWAYS SOUGHT
PERFECTION.

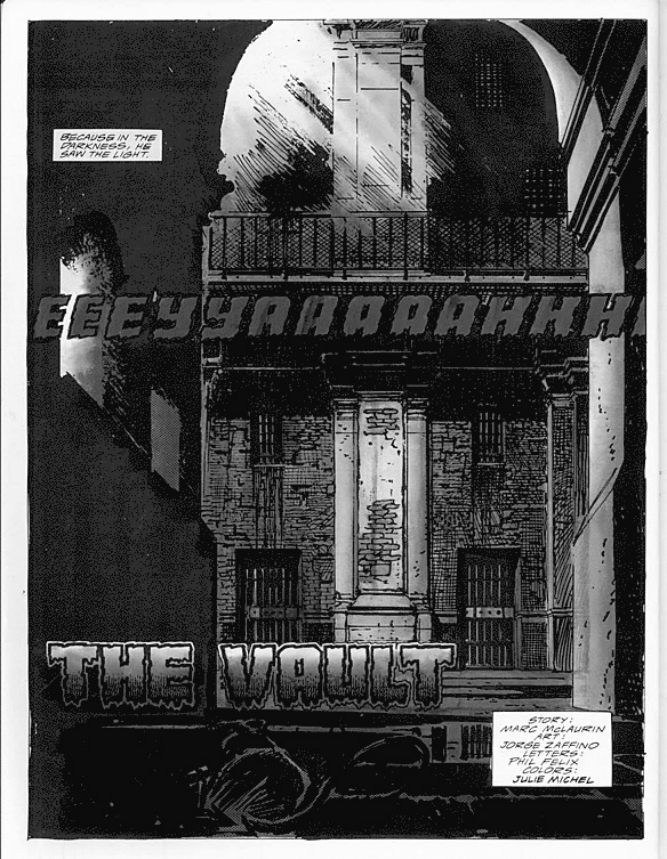
AT FIRST, HE BOUGHT
CHANGE THROUGH CHAOS,
BANKING THE FLAMES
OF REVOLUTION,
CHASING BACK THE
DARKNESS.

BUT THEN IN THE
DARKNESS, HE
SAW THE LIGHT.

HE SOLD HIS LIFE
AND HIS CAUSE FOR
A LITTLE BLACK BOX
WHICH PROMISED
HIM POWER--AND
FREEDOM--AND
FREEDOM OF THE
ULTIMATE REVOLUTION.

FREEDOM ...
FREEDOM ...



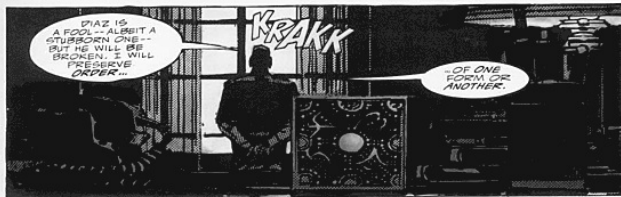
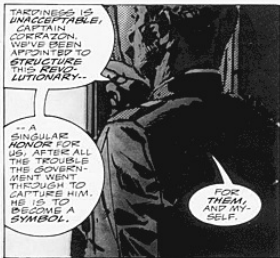


BECAUSE IN THE
DARKNESS, HE
SAW THE LIGHT

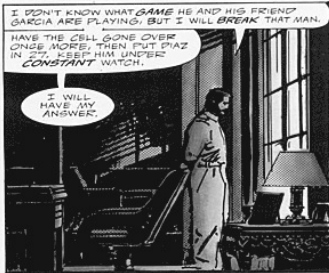
EEEEYAAAAAHHH

THE VAULT

STORY:
MARC MCLAURIN
ART:
JORGE ZAFFINO
LETTERS:
PHIL FELIX
COLORS:
JULIE MICHEL









ARTURO VELEZ HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PRECISE MAN. HE USED HIS PERSISTENT SON ORDER TO MANEUVER HIMSELF INTO A POSITION OF POWER.

FROM THE BOTTOM--UP.

HE READ POLITICAL PATTERN WELL. HE USED THAT TALENT TO MAKE IMPORTANT CONTACTS IN EVERY LEVEL OF THE GOVERNMENT.

THE HIGHPOINT OF HIS CAREER WAS BEING NAMED JEFE AT LA INFERMIDADA, AND TO HIS SPECIFICATION, EVERY LEVEL OF THE PRISON WAS REMADE.

FROM THE MIDDLE--OUT.

HERE HE RULED. WITH THE POWER OF LIFE AND DEATH OVER THOSE BROUGHT HERE, HE WAS GOD.

UNTIL NOW. AN UNEXPLAINED ESCAPE WAS NO MINOR THING --IT WOULD BRING HIS RECORD INTO QUESTION. HIS PERFECT WORLD COULD FALL APART.

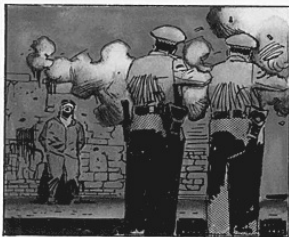
FROM THE TOP--DOWN.

UNLESS HE COULD THINK OF SOME WAY TO SOLVE A PUZZLE HE COULDN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND. THERE HAD TO BE A WAY.

YES...
YES...

MORNING.







UH, SIR... YOU'RE AWARE THAT THE MAGISTRATE AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAVE **ALREADY** BEEN NOSING AROUND THE PRISON.

THE MOUNTING DEATH RATE IS CALLING ATTENTION TO US. PERHAPS OUR PRIORITIES WOULD BEST BE SERVED IF WE WAIT BEFORE --



I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT PRIORITIES, OR ANY MORE EXCUSES. YOU'D DO WELL TO REMEMBER WHO IS IN CONTROL HERE, CAPTAIN.

I ANSWER TO NO ONE, SO LONG AS PEACE IS MAINTAINED, AND ORDER RESTORED.



THIS MYSTERY IS A BLOT ON MY RECORD THAT IS THE TOP PRIORITY, UNTIL THAT IS RESOLVED, TO HELL WITH ALL ELSE.



B-BUT DIAZ IS SUPPOSED TO BE (COUGH!) TOP P-PRI-ORITY! MORE DEATHS ONLY DRAW ATTENTION AND MAKE DIAZ THE MARTYR HE WANTS TO BE. OUR ORDERS --



RESTRUCTURING MUST HAPPEN ON ALL LEVELS. NO ONE IS EXEMPT.

NO ONE.

WHAM!

DAYS LATER.

"YOU DISAPPOINT ME, CAPTAIN. YOU'RE NOT PROVIDING ME THE RIGHT PEOPLE. YOUR INCOMPETENCE IS BRINGING HEAT DOWN ON MY HEAD."

"I'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO BRING THE HEAT TO YOU."

"AND YOU HAVEN'T FELT HEAT UNTIL YOU'VE FELT IT FROM ME."

ALMOST!
ALMOST!

"THAT DAMNED BOX MUST BE SOME SORT OF COMMUNICATION DEVICE, OR MAP, OR KEY OF SOME KIND. I NEED THAT ANSWER. BUT IT MUST HAPPEN SOON."

"WE NEED SOMEONE OF INTELLIGENCE TO REVEAL ITS SECRET. WE NEED DIAZ."

"DIAZ WILL SOLVE THE PUZZLE--OR DIE LIKE THE OTHERS."

"NO, I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT WHAT 'EL PRESIDENTE' WANTS. I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE 'REVOLUTION.'"

"WHEN I HAVE MY ANSWER, THEY WILL SEE, AND THEY MUST UNDERSTAND..."

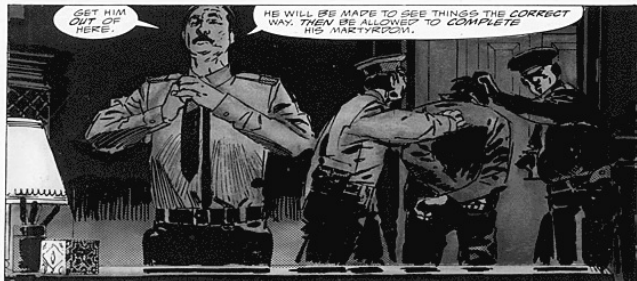
ALMOST!
PLEASE,
I'VE NEARLY GOT IT!

"I MUST BE FREE OF THIS."

NO! I WANT TO BE FREE!
I WANT TO LIVE!!

"BRING THE BOX TO ME."







DAYS
LATER.

YOUR OBSTINACY IS REMARKABLE,
PIAZ, BUT TIRESOME. THROUGH ALL
WE HAVE DONE TO YOU, YOU RE-
FUSE TO TOUCH THE BOX. YOU
MAKE THE ANSWER CLEAR TO
ME. YOU ALREADY KNOW
THE ANSWER.

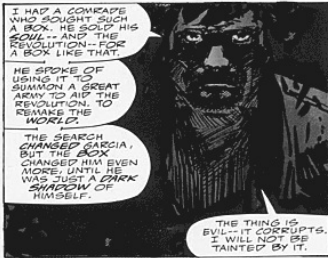
THEY ARE SENDING SOME-
ONE FROM THE CAPITAL TO
RELIEVE ME OF COMMAND.
I AM FINISHED HERE.

THAT
SHOULD
PLEASE
YOU.



THIS WILL NOT
BEFORE I LEAVE,
YOU WILL SOLVE
THE BOX, OR
DIE. YOUR
CHOICE. PICK
IT UP.

I WILL HAVE MY
ANSWER, NOW.



I HAD A COMRADE
WHO SOUGHT SUCH
A BOX. HE SOLD HIS
SOUL-- AND THE
REVOLUTION-- FOR
A BOX LIKE THAT.

HE SPOKE OF
USING IT TO
SUMMON A GREAT
ARMY TO AID THE
REVOLUTION. TO
REMAKE THE
WORLD.

THE SEARCH
CHANGED GARCIA,
BUT THE BOX
CHANGED HIM EVEN
MORE, UNTIL HE
WAS JUST A DARK
SHADOW OF
HIMSELF.

THE THING IS
EVIL--IT CORRUPTS.
I WILL NOT BE
TAINTED BY IT.

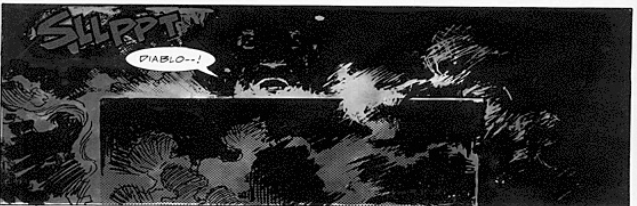


TAKE IT.

NO.



THEN I'LL GET IT FOR YOU.

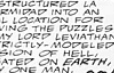


EEYYAAAAAAHHNNNNH!

TSK, TSK, SENOR VELEZ. IT IS SO DISAPPOINTING, FOR ONE SO HIGH TO HAVE FALLEN SO FAR.

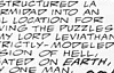
EEYYAAAAAAHHNNNNH!

TSK, TSK, GENOR VELEZ. IT IS SO DISAPPOINTING, FOR ONE SO HIGH TO HAVE FALLEN SO FAR.



YOU HAD BEEN A MODEL
OF ORDER - YOU WILL
RE-STRUCTURED LA
INFIRIMIDAD INTO AN
IDEAL LOCATION FOR
SOLVING THE PUZZLES
OF MY LORD LEVIATHAN.
A STRICTLY-MODELED
VERSION OF HELL,
CREATED ON EARTH,
BY ONE MAN.

SUCH A GREAT
ACHIEVEMENT ==
SUCH A GREAT
DISAPPOINTMENT.



YOU HAD BEEN A MODEL
OF ORDER - YOU WILL
RE-STRUCTURED LA
INFIRIMIDAD INTO AN
IDEAL LOCATION FOR
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OF MY LORD LEVIATHAN.
A STRICTLY-MODELED
VERSION OF HELL,
CREATED ON EARTH,
BY ONE MAN.

SUCH A GREAT
ACHIEVEMENT ==
SUCH A GREAT
DISAPPOINTMENT.

LUCKILY, YOU'RE TO BE ALLOWED ANOTHER CHANCE -- AN OPPORTUNITY TO REGAIN GRACE.

AFTER ALL, ALL YOU LACK IS STRUCTURE.

OF COURSE, RE-STRUCTURING WILL TAKE A BIT OF TIME, BUT IT WILL BE COMPLETE, AND FOREVER -- ON ALL LEVELS AT ONCE.

LUCKILY, YOU'RE TO BE ALLOWED ANOTHER CHANCE -- AN OPPORTUNITY TO REGAIN GRACE.

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FROM THE TOP--DOWN.

FROM THE BOTTOM--UP.

AND FROM THE MIDDLE--

NOOOOOOOOOOOO !!!

AND IN THE DARKNESS,
ARTURO VELEZ SAW
THE LIGHT...

FROM THE TOP--DOWN.

FROM THE BOTTOM--UP.

AND FROM THE MIDDLE--

NOOOOOOOOOOOO !!!

AND IN THE DARKNESS,
ARTURO VELEZ SAW
THE LIGHT...

FROM THE TOP--DOWN.

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AND IN THE DARKNESS,
ARTURO VELEZ SAW
THE LIGHT...

FROM THE TOP--DOWN.

FROM THE BOTTOM--UP.

AND FROM THE MIDDLE--

NOOOOOOOOOOOO !!!

AND IN THE DARKNESS,
ARTURO VELEZ SAW
THE LIGHT...

THIS
END UP



MACAULAY
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DIVERS HANDS

WRITER
JAMES ROBERT SMITH
ARTIST
MIKE HOFFMAN

CARRBORO
HANSEN'S DISEASE
CENTER

THE ONLY LEPER COLONY
IN THE LOWER 48.
CARRBORO, LOUISIANA.

THESE ARE OUR PATIENTS WHO ARE
IN THE MOST ADVANCED STAGES OF
HANSEN'S DISEASE, MARY. THESE ARE
THE PATIENTS WHO NEED THE MOST
CARE, TO WHOM YOU'VE BEEN
ASSIGNED.

I SEE.

AND WHO
IS HE?

HE TOUCHES THE CONFIGURATION
WITH THE GNARLED STUMPS LEFT
TO HIM. HE CANNOT FEEL IT, CANNOT
EXPERIENCE THE ANGLES, THE
GROOVES, THE ETCHINGS HE
KNOWS SO WELL.

THAT'S VINCENT. HE'S A STRANGE
ONE. CAME HERE A LITTLE OVER
A YEAR AGO PRETTY MUCH IN THE
STATE HE'S IN NOW. CAME UP TO
US FROM A CLINIC IN MEXICO --
THEY SENT HIM HERE SINCE HE'S
AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. EDUCATED
FELLOW.

AND WHAT'S THAT HE
HAS WITH HIM?

I HONESTLY DON'T
KNOW. YOU'LL HAVE
TO ASK HIM.

SOLUTIONS,
TOO.

I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW HE
ENDED UP LIKE THAT. HE SHOULD'VE
KNOWN TREATMENT COULD HAVE
ARRESTED THE BACILLUS.

HE IMAGINES HE CAN FEEL THE
PUZZLE IN HANDS THAT ARE NO
LONGER HIS. AMAZING FLESH
QUESTING FOR THE SOLUTION,
WONDERFUL DIGITS SOLVING
THE PROBLEM.

PROBLEMS WITHIN
PROBLEMS.





COME IN.



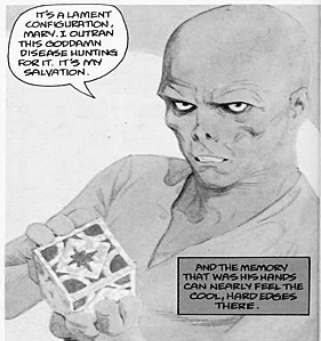
VINCENT, I'VE BROUGHT YOUR MEDICATION.

WATCHING HER, HE WONDERS HOW THE DOOR FELT BENEATH HER RAPPING, TAPPING KNUCKLES; HE WONDERS IF THERE IS PAIN.



WHAT IS THAT BOX YOU ALWAYS CARRY AROUND? WHERE DID YOU GET IT & IT'S... STRANGE.

HE WAITS FOR HER TO TOUCH IT, WANTING HER TO.



IT'S A LAMENT CONFIGURATION, MARY. I OUTRAN THIS GODDAMN DISEASE HUNTING FOR IT. IT'S MY SALVATION.

AND THE MEMORY THAT WAS HIS HANDS CAN NEARLY FEEL THE COOL, HARD EDGES THERE.

AS THE BOND OF FRIENDSHIP DEVELOPS, HER CURIOSITY TOWARD THE CUBE CONTINUES TO GROW.



IT IS MARY WHO DRAWS COOL FABRICS OVER HIS BODY.



SHE PLACES MEDICINE ON A TONGUE THAT BARELY TASTES, DEPRIVED OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF FLAVOR.



AND HE BEGINS TO TELL HER SOMETHING OF DESIRE.



YOU'RE DOING A FINE JOB, MARY, BUT IT'S COME TO OUR ATTENTION THAT YOU'RE SPENDING ENTIRELY TOO MUCH TIME WITH VINCENT AT THE EXPENSE OF YOUR OTHER PATIENTS.

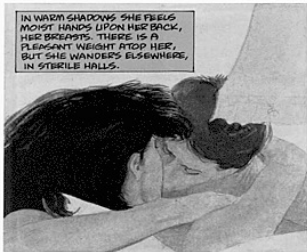
I'M SORRY, DOCTOR WATKINS. I WASN'T AWARE THAT THERE WAS A PROBLEM.

I'M SURE YOU DIDN'T REALIZE IT, BUT YOU NEED TO DEVOTE MORE ATTENTION TO SOME OF THE OTHER PATIENTS IN THE FUTURE.

I WILL, DOCTOR. I WILL.



IN WARM SHADOWS SHE FEELS
MOIST HANDS UPON HER BACK,
HER BREASTS. THERE IS A
PLEASANT WEIGHT ATOP HER,
BUT SHE WANDERS ELSEWHERE,
IN STERILE HALLS.



OKAY, WHAT'S WRONG,
MARY? WHAT'S BUG-
GING YOU. YOU'RE AS
COLD AS ICE TONIGHT.



IT'S NOTHING, REALLY.
I'M JUST THINKING
ABOUT WORK. ABOUT,
YOU KNOW, VINCENT.
DOCTOR WATKINS SAYS-

JESUS, MARY! CAN'T
YOU LEAVE YOUR WORK
AT WORK? I'M TRYING
TO MAKE LOVE TO YOU.
CAN'T YOU FORGET
ABOUT YOUR PATIENTS?



AGAIN, SHE FEELS WARM
HANDS ON HER, PULLING
HER TO HIM. AND THIS
TIME SHE IS THERE.



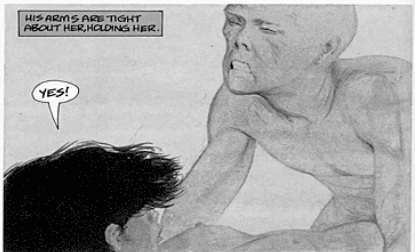
YES!



SHE FEELS HIM, NOW,
PRODDING AT HER,
ENTERING.

HIS ARMS ARE TIGHT
ABOUT HER, HOLDING HER.

YES!

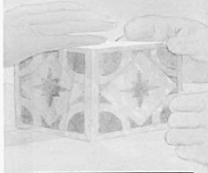




I CONTRACTED THE DISEASE SOME YEARS BACK. I CAN'T SAY WHEN—2 TO 10 YEARS BEFORE MY BALLS FELL OFF, I GUESS. I WAS A STUDENT—STUDYING INDIAN CULTURE. THERE WERE JUNGLES. I LIKED IT, DESPITE THE HEAT AND THE WET AIR. I FELT ALIVE THERE, MARY, LIKE I HADN'T BEFORE OR SINCE.



WHAT
DID YOU
DISCOVER?



HIS SKIN IS TAILT, SCALY,
HARSH BENEATH THE SOFT
WHORLS OF HER FINGERTIPS.
HE WONDER'S WHAT THE
SENSATION MUST BE
LIKE FOR HER.

I WAS TOLD ABOUT,
AND HAD READ OF A
MAN NAMED LEMARCHAND
OF SOMETHING THAT HE
HAD DESIGNED--LAMENT
CONFIGURATIONS, AND
I KNEW THAT I WAS
SAVED.



HE CANNOT QUITE RECALL THE
SMELL OF THE PLACE, THE FEEL
OF HARD WOOD AT HIS BACK,
OF THE LIQUOR SITTING HEAVY
IN HIS GUT. BUT HE REMEMBERS
THE RUSH OF HOPE THAT FLOOD-
ED OVER HIM.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN
"SAVED"? YOU'RE NOT AN
IGNORANT MAN. MY GOD!
YOU HAD TO KNOW THAT HAN-
SEN'S DISEASE CAN BE AR-
RESTED WITH TREATMENT!
WHY DIDN'T YOU GET
HELP?



NOT THE KIND OF HELP
I TRULY NEEDED. WHY
MERELY ARREST THE DIS-
EASE WHEN I CAN RID MY-
SELF OF IT, ENTIRELY? I HAD
TO HAVE THIS, MY LAMENT
CONFIGURATION!



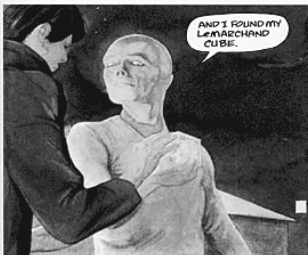
AND NOW, THE SHADE OF
ONCE HANDS, OF FINGERS
THAT WERE, WRITHE ABOUT
THE SURFACE OF THE
PUZZLE.

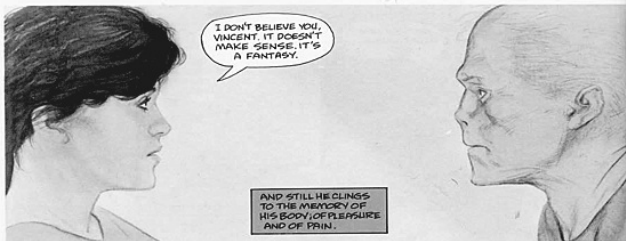
THERE ARE NO SULFA DRUGS
IN THE PLACES I HAD TO
SEARCH. AND ALL THE WHILE
THE LEPROSY KEPT PACE
WITH ME.



AND WHEN IT LOOKED HOPE-
LESS, WHEN IT LOOKED AS IF
I HAD WASTED WHAT WAS LEFT
OF MY TIME, I DISCOVERED THAT
LEMARCHAND HAD ONCE LIVED
HERE--AT THE CENTER! I DON'T
KNOW WHY OR FOR HOW LONG HE
WAS HERE; I ONLY KNEW THAT
HE HAD BEEN HERE, HAD WORK-
ED HERE. SO I CAME.







I DON'T BELIEVE YOU, VINCENT. IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE. IT'S A FANTASY.

AND STILL HE CLINGS TO THE MEMORY OF HIS BODY, OF PLEASURE AND OF PAIN.



IT'S NOT A FANTASY. IT'S REAL.

BUT IT IS SO HARD TO HOLD ON.



I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.

I DON'T CARE IF YOU BELIEVE ME. JUST HELP ME WORK THE PUZZLE. JUST HELP ME, PLEASE?

OH, IF HE CAN JUST HOLD ON...



I'LL HELP YOU.



A ROOM, WHERE NO ONE WILL INTERRUPT US.

WHERE ARE WE GOING, VINCENT?

HE IMAGINES HOW THE COOL AIR MUST FEEL AGAINST HER FACE.



HERE.

I'VE NEVER BEEN DOWN HERE. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THIS WAS HERE.

HE PRETENDS HE KNOWS HOW THE SOLES OF HER FEET PRESS AGAINST THE INSIDES OF HER SHOES.



OH, IT'S A BIG PLACE, THE CENTER. THERE ARE PLACES HERE EVEN I'VE NEVER SEEN. NOW, HAVE A SEAT THERE ON THE FLOOR.

HE THINKS HE CAN RECALL THE QUICK PAIN OF LIGHT ON SENSITIVE EYES.



THAT'S RIGHT. TAKE IT IN YOUR HANDS. HOLD IT LIKE THAT. YES. YES.

THE FLOOR IS HARSH THROUGH THE MESH OF HER HOSE, COOL AND DAMP AGAINST HER KNEES.



THAT'S RIGHT. PRESS THERE. FEEL THE JOINTS, HOW THEY MOVE ONE AGAINST THE OTHER?



TWIST THERE. TWIST! FEEL IT MOVE!

THE MATERIAL MOVES SMOOTHLY BENEATH HER TOUCH, AS IF OF ITS OWN VOLITION. VINCENT GUIDES HER ALONG.



SOMETHING'S HAPPENING!

TURN IT! TURN IT!

IN SPITE OF THE DISEASE, OF THE GREAT TENSION, VINCENT CAN ALMOST RECALL WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO FEEL ANOTHER IN HIS LIVING EMBRACE.



YES!
YES!

AND SOON, HE MAY ONCE MORE KNOW THE FEEL OF ONE TEXTURE AGAINST ANOTHER.

DARK FIGURES STRIDE OUT OF THE LIGHT, BUT NOT THE ANGEL-LIKE CREATURES WHOM MARY WOULD HAVE EXPECTED EVEN HAD SHE BELIEVED VINCENT.

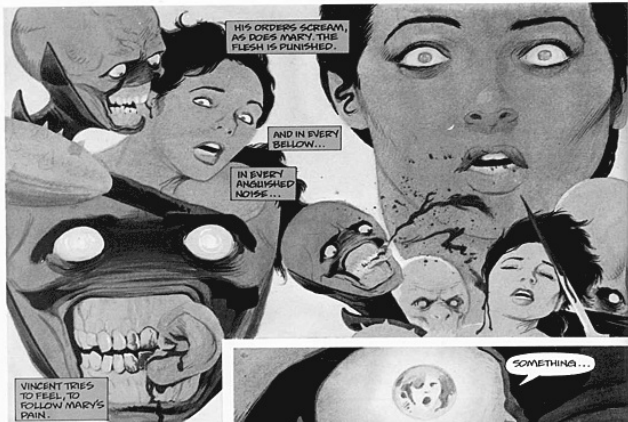


AH, SWEET VINCENT, I SEE YOU HAVE BROUGHT US ANOTHER. AREN'T YOU THE DEAR ONE?



HE DOES IMAGINE.





HIS ORDERS SCREAM,
AS DOES MARY. THE
FLESH IS PUNISHED.

AND IN EVERY
BELLOW...

IN EVERY
ANGUISHED
NOISE...

VINCENT TRIES
TO FEEL, TO
FOLLOW MARY'S
PAIN.

HOLD. I SEE
SOMETHING HERE.
SOMETHING.



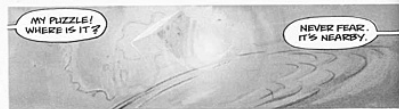
SOMETHING...



HE WHISPERS
TO HER.



THE LAMENT CONFIGURATION
MAKES A WONDERFUL ARC,
DARK DROPLETS FOLLOWING
ITS FLIGHT.



MY PUZZLE!
WHERE IS IT?

NEVER FEAR.
IT'S NEARBY.

WHERE WAS HIS CLUBE?
WHERE WAS IT? HE LONGED
FOR THE FAMILIAR PRESS-
URE OF IT BETWEEN
CALLOUSED STUMPS.

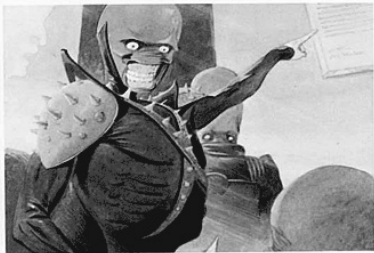
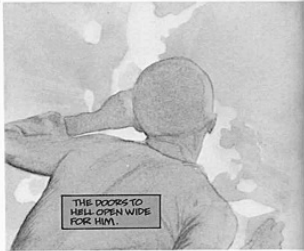
NEARBY. HE HAD SAID THAT
IT WAS NEARBY, AND IT WAS.
THE GENOBITES NEVER
LIED. NEVER.

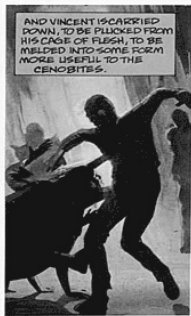
HE SEARCHED.

AND SEARCHED.

AND SEARCHED.

UNTIL HE FOUND IT.







MIGNON

MAX WAYNE
WASTED MOST
OF HIS ADULT
LIFE TOILING
AS A FREE-
LANCE WRITER.

MAX CONSIDERED HIMSELF THE
CONSUMMATE PROFESSIONAL. HE
DESCRIBED HIMSELF AS A CRAFTS-
MAN. "I ENJOY THE CHALLENGE
OF CREATING SOMETHING TO FIT A
CLIENT'S SPECIFICATIONS," HE
WOULD OFTEN SAY.

BUT UNTIL NOW, HIS ONLY ACCOMPLISHMENT OF
ANY LASTING VALUE CAME THE DAY HE LABORI-
OUSLY SOLVED ONE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT,
AND ODDLY SEDUCTIVE, STORY PROBLEM. THE
PROBLEM, ONCE SOLVED, REVEALED ITSELF AS A
LAMENT CONFIGURATION. AS A POORWAY,
IF YOU WILL, TO HELL.

MAX WAYNE HAS
WASTED MOST OF
HIS AFTERLIFE
TOILING AS A
FREELANCE WRITER.
TO CREATE ORDER
FROM CHAOS IS
HIS CURRENT,
AND ETERNAL,
ASSIGNMENT.

MAX WAYNE USED
TO LIVE IN BURBANK,
CALIFORNIA. NOW
HE LIVES IN HELL.

HE'D BE HARD
PRESSED TO
TELL THE DIFFERENCE.

FOLLOWING A LONG AND
UNBROKEN STRING OF
WORKMANLIKE SCRIPTS,
MAX HAS UNEXPECTEDLY
DELIVERED SOMETHING
THAT TRANSCENDS HIS
MEDIUM. CERTAINLY THIS
ONE GOES BEYOND MERE
CRAFT. THIS ONE IS ART.
IT LIVES AND BREATHES.

MAX WAYNE IS THE FATHER
TO A MIRACLE.

!GURGLE!

THIS IS
PERFECT!
THERE'S ONLY
ONE THING TO
DO WITH IT.

I'VE GOT
TO GET IT
OVER TO MY
EDITOR.

STORY DWAYNE McDUFFIE, ARTIST KEVIN ONEILL, LETTERER JIM NOVAK



BUT I DO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO LEVIATHAN, AND TO THE SPONSORS, AND PRESSURE GROUPS, OH, AND TO THE AUDIENCE, OF COURSE.



LET'S TRY AND BE PROFESSIONAL
HERE. THAT'S JUST A COSMETIC
CHANGE. AFTER ALL, THE KID CAN
STILL SEE...

OH, RIGHT.
OKAY.
SORRY.

...OF COURSE,
THIS'LL HAVE
TO GO TOO.

KRUCH

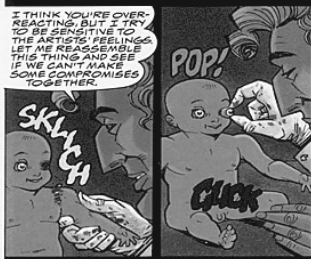
THERE.
THAT WASN'T
SO BAD,
WAS IT?

I, DUNNO...
BILATERAL
SYMMETRY
WAS ONE OF MY
THEMES...

AND THERE'S
JUST ONE
MORE LITTLE
PROBLEM.

NOW, YOU AND I
ARE MEN OF THE
WORLD, SO WE
DON'T FIND THIS
SORT OF THING
DISTASTEFUL...

...BUT YOU HAVE
TO UNDERSTAND.
IF SOMEONE TOOK
THIS PART OUT OF
CONTEXT, WE
COULD BE LEFT
OPEN TO
CRITICISM.



...MY COMPUTER CAN TRANSLATE SENSORY INPUT INTO WHAT THE SUBJECT WILL BELIEVE TO BE REALITY-- HE EATS, HE SLEEPS, HE HAS SEX--WITHOUT LEAVING HIS CHAIR.

HIS BRAIN RECEIVES THE PHANTOM SIGNALS AS IF THEY WERE REAL, AND IN ACTUAL TIME.

FOR INSTANCE, IF HE SPENDS THREE HOURS IN A NICE RESTAURANT EATING LUNCH, THEN HE'S ON THE MACHINE FOR THREE HOURS.

BUT WHEN HE COMES OFF HE'LL PROBABLY WANT TO GRAB A BURGER BECAUSE WHILE HIS MIND'S BEEN GORGING, HIS BODY'S BEEN STARVING.



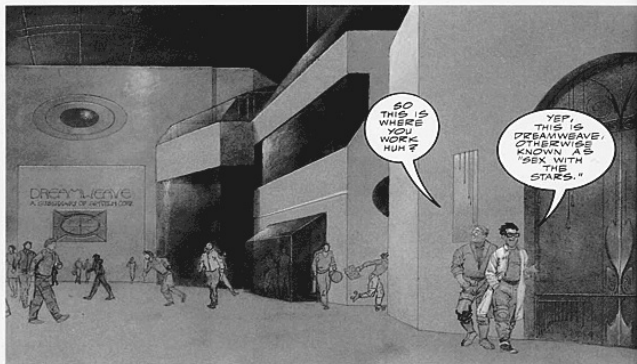
MY MACHINE IS CAPABLE OF ALL NORMAL HUMAN SENSATIONS, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO THOSE. 'DREAM WEAVERS' AS I'VE NAMED IT, IS AN ENIGMA-- LET THE MAN WHO OPERATES IT DISCOVER FOR HIMSELF THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS THE PUZZLE.

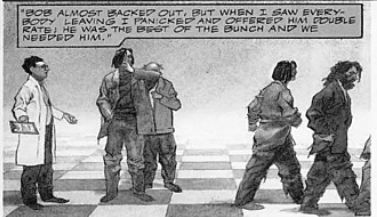
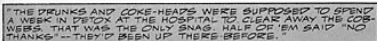
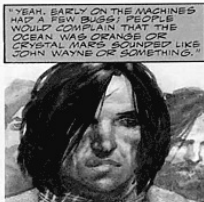
I LEAVE MY LIFE'S WORK IN YOUR HANDS, CARL. AS PRESIDENT OF AMTECH YOU'LL BE ABLE TO PUT IT TO USE. G.O.O.P. HUNTING.



THE THRESHOLD

STORY--SCOTT HAMPTON AND MARK KNEECE, ART--SCOTT HAMPTON, LETTERS--PHIL FELIX.





"MAJOR SCREW UP. BOB HERE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE CATCHING SOME WAVES, BUT THE COMPUTER GOT CONFUSED AND FLOPPED HIM DOWN ON THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN IN HAWAII RIDING A LAVA FLOW. CAN YOU IMAGINE?"



"OF COURSE, HE LOST IT INSTANTLY. HE WASN'T A VERY GOOD SURFER, I SUPPOSE. HE STAYED ON THE MACHINE ALL NIGHT."

"ALL NIGHT?!"



"YEAH, SAM, ONE OF THE OPERATORS ON THE LATE SHIFT WAS VERY LAX... ONE TIME HE FORGOT TO REPLACE THE FILTER IN THE COFFEE MAKER..."

"WAIT A MINUTE! YOU'RE TELLING ME THIS GUY FLOATED AROUND IN MOLTEN LAVA--? FOR HOURS?!"

"YEAH, IT WAS A TOUGH BREAK."



OH, MAN! SO YOU JUST KEEPT HIM HERE?
SURE, HIS MIND'S BLOWN. HE CAN'T BE OF ANY USE TO ANYONE ANYMORE, SO I KEEP HIM AROUND BOB'S MY PET, AREN'T YOU, BOY? I LIKE TO REALLY GIVE HIM SOME FUN-- WATCH THIS!



WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I'M MAKING HIM SCREW A HORNET'S NEST. WANNA HEAR?





GOT A PAIR OF LUNGS, DON'T HE?

LISTEN, TOM, I'M ALMOST AFRAID TO ASK, BUT JUST EXACTLY HOW MUCH PAIN HAS THIS GUY HAD? I MEAN, WHAT ALL HAVE YOU PUT HIM THROUGH?

CLICK

HEMM, WELL, LET'S SEE: HE WAS EATEN ALIVE BY ANTS ALL LAST WEEK; HE WAS GANG RAPED ONCE; I'VE DROPPED HIM FROM THE TWIN TOWERS; CROWNED HIM; CRUSHED HIS BALLS-- YOU NAME IT.

HOLY SHIT!

CHILD'S PLAY. WE'VE ONLY SCRAPED THE SURFACE. SO FAR I'VE ONLY BEEN ABLE TO COME UP WITH STUFF LIKE FIRES, ANTS, SNOW, ETC.

"BUT NOW, BY CROSS CIRCUITING, I'VE CREATED WHAT I THINK IS A LOOP. AND, IF I'M RIGHT, THE COMPUTER WILL PICK UP BOB'S REACTION, HIS RESPONSE TO STIMULATION, AND FEED IT BACK TO HIM ALONG WITH THE INITIAL STIMULUS."

"BOB PICKS UP THE STRENGTHENED SIGNAL, RESPONDS, THE COMPUTER PICKS UP THE NEW RESPONSE, ADDS IT TO THE SIGNAL-- SEE WHAT I'M SAYING?"

"KIND OF."

"LOOK, SAY AN UGLY MAN IS STANDING IN FRONT OF A MIRROR. HE SEES HIS REFLECTION AND GRIMACES AT HIS OWN UGLINESS, MAKING HIMSELF UGLIER."

"SEEING THIS HE LETS HIS MOUTH HANG OPEN IN DISGUST, BUT THAT JUST MAKES HIM MORE DISGUSTING. IF HE COULD KEEP IT UP, HE'D BECOME UGLIER THAN UGLY, INFINITE UGLINESS."

"THAT'S WHAT I'M HOPING FOR WITH BOB. IF I'M RIGHT, THE PAIN WILL GROW AND GROW UNTIL IT BECOMES-- WHO KNOWS WHAT."

"THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO FIND OUT: WHAT LIES BEYOND PAIN."



WHAT DOES PAIN BECOME AFTER YOU CROSS THE THRESHOLD?





TOM,
ISN'T IT?
MY NAME'S
LEO...



I'D LIKE TO OFFER MY
CONGRATULATIONS. I HADN'T
EXPECTED ANYONE TO SOLVE
MY DREAMWEAVE PUZZLE
SO QUICKLY.

OYAAH...
NNGSH...
GLIMPH...



AND SO EFFORTLESSLY.
I MUST ADMIT YOU PUT
ME COMPLETELY IN THE
SHADE, MY FRIEND!

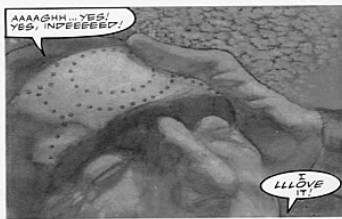
SAY, TOM,
MIND IF I HAVE
A GO? IT'S
BEEN A
WHILE.

NU...NU...
NNGSH...



THANKS.

PARDON
ME, BOB.



AAAAGHH...YES!
YES, INDEEED!

I
LLOVE
IT!



LILY
GALLERY

Soho, Manhattan. A day
when the wind howls
off the Hudson, cutting
through to the soul.

PERHAPS A
DUCHAMP PRINT
WOULD BE WHAT--

NO.
THE
KOSTABI
WILL BE FINE.

WELL, *FELDWEGEL*, WHAT
A SURPRISE. WHAT BRINGS
YOU HERE, *BUSINESS* OR
PLEASURE?

GOOD.
HOW
WOULD
YOU...
EXCUSE
ME.

NEITHER,
GULL?

"THE PLEASURES OF DECEPTION"

STORY BY
PHILIP KUTNER
ART BY
BILL AGER
LETTERING BY
CASPAR SALDINO



LIFE AND DEATH.
WELL?

INTERESTING.
SIMILAR TO
YOUR EARLY
WORK.



REMINISCENT
OF *BACON*
IN A WAY.

DARK.
VERY
DARK.



BUT I'VE
NO MARKET
FOR THIS AT
PRESENT.



THIS TYPE OF
EXPRESSIONISM'S
FINANCIALLY
RISKY.

COME ON,
MARCELLA, YOU
DID WELL OUT OF
MY LAST SERIES.
HAVE I EVER LET
YOU DOWN?



DAVIS, THAT WAS
TWO YEARS AGO.
THE MARKET'S
CHANGED.

YOUR WORK SELLS.
EVENTUALLY. BUT
I THINK IT'S SUFFER-
ING FROM YOUR
DRINKING.

YOU
WON'T
TAKE
IT?



NO, I DON'T
LIKE IT.



IT'S TOO DARK
FOR MY TASTE.
RIGHT NOW,
STAGNANT.



YOUR ALCOHOLISM'S
DRAGGING YOU AND
YOUR WORK DOWN.
STOP IT, DAVIS. YOU'RE
PISSING YOUR TALENT
AWAY! (COFF! COFF!
COFF!)



DO I
TELL YOU
HOW TO
RUN
YOUR
LIFE?



DO I
TELL YOU
NOT TO
SMOKE?
EVEN IF
YOU'RE
GETTING
LUNG
CANCER?
JUST LIKE..

YOUR FATHER?
COME ON, DAVIS.
HE'S BEEN DEAD
OVER A YEAR.
SET YOUR ACT
TOGETHER. STOP
LIVING IN HIS
SHADOW.



LIGHTEN UP.
LIVE A
LITTLE.



IF YOU'RE
WORKING
ON A NEW
SERIES,
I WANT
TO SEE
IT, DAVIS.



I INTEND TO.
I'VE GOT PLANS
THAT WILL TAKE
YOUR BREATH
AWAY.

LATER...



I WENT TO A
LOT OF TROUBLE
TO LOCATE THIS.



DRINK?



NO. LET
ME SEE
IT.





THIS LITTLE ITEM TOOK
ALL OF MY SKILLS TO
OBTAIN, SURPRISING FOR
SUCH A **MEDIOCRE**
ANTIQUE.

TIME IS MONEY.
IF YOU WANT THIS LITTLE
OBJECT D'ART IT'S GOING
TO COST YOU.



DOUBLE
WHAT
WE DIS-
CUSSED.



\$5,000. TAKE IT
OR LEAVE IT.



WHA...
**CAREFUL
REINHARDT!**
DON'T
DAMAGE IT!



**WE HAD
A DEAL!**



DO YOU
HEAR ME?



\$5,000.
GOT IT.



SELLER'S
MARKET BUDDY.
YOU WANT IT,
PAY UP.



I NEED IT
FOR MY WORK.



IS THAT SO?
NO PAY.
NO PLAY.
DEALS,
FELD'NEBEL,
ARE NEVER
FIXED.
EVERYTHING
IS
NEGOTIABLE.

OKAY!
OKAY.

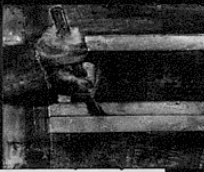
BUT I'LL
NEED A
DAY OR TWO
TO COME
UP WITH
IT.



"I NEED IT. IF I
HAD THE MONEY
TO PAY THE GREEDY
BASTARD, BUT I
CAN'T. I'VE GOT
TO HAVE IT."



"DESPERATE
MEANS
DESPERATE
MEASURES."



"WHATEVER YOUR PLEASURE,
RHEINHARDT WILL DELIVER.
RHEINHARDT, THE MAN.
NO SHIT."



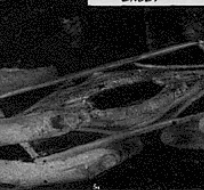
"THIS WILL
COME IN
HANDY."



"I HATE THIS STUFF,
MUST HAVE SNOTTED
HALF OF BOLIVIA
ONCE."



"OH, YOU
LITTLE
BEAUTY."



"DON'T KNOW HOW,
OR EVEN IF YOU'LL
WORK, BUT I
PRAY YOU DO."



"...BECAUSE RIGHT
NOW YOU'RE THE
ONLY HOPE I'VE
GOT."



"IT HAS MANY NAMES. THE LAMENT CONFIGURATION.
LE MARCHAND'S BOX. THE CUBE OF TEARS.
HEARD ABOUT IT FROM A GUY WHO WENT ON A
SPIRITUAL QUEST TO NEPAL, AN OCCULTIST WITH
A MOHAWK."

"IT'S REPUTED TO BE
AN ARCAIC PLEASURE
DEVICE THAT AMPLIFIES
SENSATIONS..."

"HUXLEY WROTE ABOUT IT IN
THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION.
IT'S ORIGINS ARE VAGUE.
SUPPOSEDLY THE WORK OF
15TH CENTURY ARTIST PHILLIP
LE MARCHAND."

"THE GUY WROTE ME FROM
SOUTH AMERICA. SAID HE'D
LOCATED ONE. SAID IT IN-
CREASED HIS PERCEPTIONS.
THEN HE DISAPPEARED.
NEVER HEARD FROM HIM
AGAIN."

"NINE MONTHS NOT
BEING ABLE TO PAINT.
IT ALL WENT TO HELL
WHEN THE OLD MAN
DIED..."

"LIFELESS."

"STATIC. I
HATE IT..."

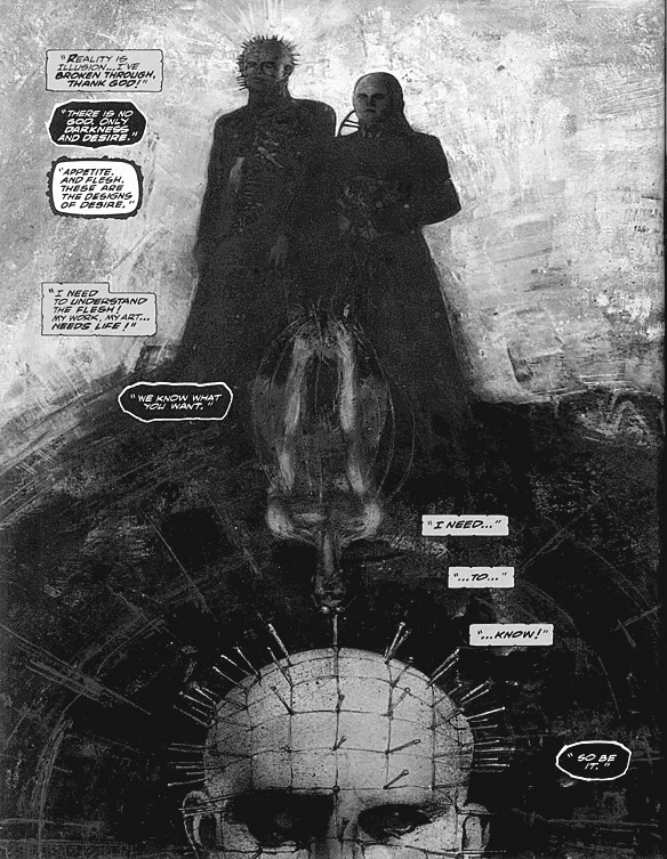
"MARCELLA'S
RIGHT."

"MY WORK
IS STALE."

"I'VE GOT
TO FIND THE
SENSUAL..."

"...SPARK?
IF I CAN'T
PAINT WHAT'S
THE POINT
IN LIVING?..."





"REALITY IS
ILLUSION...I'VE
BROKEN THROUGH.
THANK GOD!"

"THERE IS NO
GOD. ONLY
DARKNESS
AND DESIRE."

"APPETITE,
AND FLESH.
THESE ARE
THE DESIGNS
OF DESIRE."

"I NEED
TO UNDERSTAND
THE FLESH!
MY WORK, MY ART...
NEEDS LIFE!"

"WE KNOW WHAT
YOU WANT."

"I NEED..."

"...TO..."

"...KNOW!"

"SO BE
IT."



"WHAT VISIONS
ARE THE--!!"

AAAAA



"YOU WILL
UNDERSTAND."

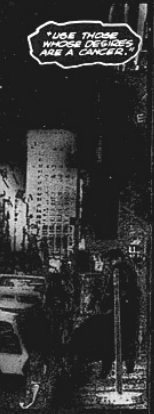


"NOW...?"



"YOU
PROVIDE
THE
MATERIAL."

"WE WILL
GUIDE YOUR
HAND."



"USE THOSE
WHOSE DECISIONS
ARE A CANCER."





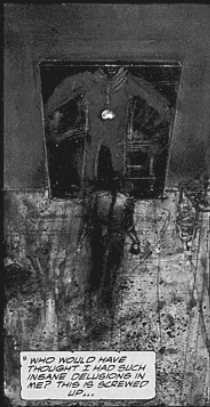
"ONCE WORKED
ON PEYOTE.
KID STUFF IN
COMPARISON..."

"NEVER THOUGHT
DERANGEMENT
COULD BE SO
TACTILE, SO REAL..."



"MY ENTIRE BEING
IS ALIVE, REVELING
IN THE DEATH OF
SANITY..."

"WHOA! STEADY,
DAVIS... YOU'RE
STARTING TO GET
PRETENTIOUS
(ARE YOU HERE?)..."



"WHO WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT I HAD SUCH
INSANE DELUSIONS IN
ME? THIS IS SCREWED
UP..."



"WHAT IS RITUAL? JUST
DISCIPLINE, STRUCTURE
THAT SHAPES OUR
PERCEPTIONS..."



"IF THIS IS REALLY
MADNESS..."



"...THEN KEEP ME
FROM SANITY..."



"GOYA WAS RIGHT...
THE SLEEP OF REASON
DOES BREED MONSTERS..."



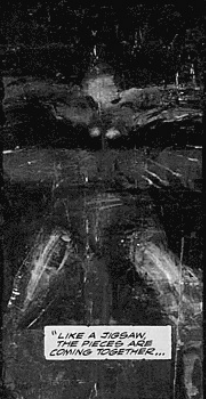
"TRYING TO BALANCE THE
INSANITY, THE SENSUAL
DELIRIUM WITH OBJECTIVITY.
BUT WHO AM I KIDDING?
THIS IS A ONE WAY STREET..."



"SOMETHING'S CHANGED
INSIDE ME. I DON'T THINK
I CAN TURN BACK, EVEN IF
I WANTED TO..."



"I WANT... I
NEED TO
UNDERSTAND
ALL THIS..."



"LIKE A JIGSAW,
THE PIECES ARE
COMING TOGETHER..."



"CAN'T SEE THE
WHOLE PICTURE
BUT--"



TOOK ME
A WHILE
TO TRACK
YOU DOWN.
TIME
TO PAY...



IN
BLOOD!



WHAT *IS*
THIS SHIT?
YOU CALL
THIS WORK,
FELDNABEL?



DON'T TELL ME.
I KNOW. IT'S MODERN
ART AND A MORON
LIKE ME WOULDN'T
UNDERSTAND.

YOU THINK I'M
STUPID, FELDNABEL?
WHERE'S THE BOX,
ASSHOLE?



"THEY CAN'T HAVE
IT... IT'S MINE--"





"THIS... ISN'T HAPPENING...
I'M TRIPPING OUT... I
MUST BE..."



"...BUT WHAT IF
IT IS REAL?
IT--NO! IT
CAN'T BE..."



"I'M INSANE.
PLEASE LET ME
BE INSANE!"



"THIS IS NOT
REAL!!"



"INSANE? REAL?
THERE IS NO INSANITY.
REALITY IS THE FLESH."



"AND THE FLESH CAN BE
REARRANGED, THEREFORE
REALITY MAY CHANGE."

"OH, GOD, WHAT
HAVE I
UNLEASHED...?"

"GOD?--HA!
YOU SOUGHT
UNDERSTANDING;
WE ANSWERED
YOUR CALL."

"THE FLESH HAS AS
MANY LEVELS AS THERE
ARE DEGREES OF
PERCEPTION. YOU WANTED
TO EXPLORE."

"ALL THIS
IS REAL?!"

"YES, IT IS REAL. ALL OF IT.
THE DESIGN AND EXECUTION
ARE YOURS."

"TAKE IT AWAY... LET ME GO...
I DON'T WANT TO KNOW... THIS
IS-- OH, GOD!"

"THERE CAN BE NO TURNING
BACK. NO RETREAT. YOU
HAVE TO LEARN. YOU WILL
KNOW."

"THIS IS IN-
CREDIBLE,
DAVE.
YOU'RE CER-
TAINLY ONTO
SOME-
THINGS--"

--OR ARE
YOU ON
SOME-
THING?
(HA HA)

"LEARN?
LEARN
WHAT?"

"THE
LESSON
OF THE
FLESH."

"NO, NO, NO!! I'M
ENDING IT. IT'S
OVER. THIS IS...
IT'S TOO HORRIBLE.
FUCK... --"

"YOU
CANNOT."

"THIS IS THE WEIRDEST,
MOST ORIGINAL WORK
YOU'VE EVER DONE. I--"

"WHAT'S HAPPENING
TO ME ??? NO...MORE!!!"

WHAT'S
WRONG?
DAV--

DAVIS, ARE
YOU
ALRIGHT?

DON'T
TOUCH
ME!!!

"AAAAHH!! I CAN FEEL
THE CANCER INSIDE HER.
SPREADING. CELLS
DYING..."

"...THERE IS
MORE YOU MUST
LEARN."

"NO NO!! I'M INSANE!
THIS IS NOT REAL!!!
PLEASE, GOD, IT CAN'T
BE REAL..."

"I'M NOT ON IT--
I'M LIVING IT!
AAAAHHHMAAG!
IT...HURTS!...
THE HORROR
OF IT--"

DAVIS?

"BELIEVE
IT."

WHAT THE
HELL
ARE YOU
ON ?!



"THERE IS MORE
FOR YOU TO
EXPERIENCE..."



"AN ECTOPIC PREGNANCY.
SHE DOESN'T KNOW THE
FETUS IS FORMING IN HER
TUBE..."



SPARE
CHANGE.
MAN? DIME?
QUARTER?
GIMME
SOME
CHANGE
MAN.
WANNA
EAT...

"I CAN FEEL PAIN
THAT DOESN'T
EXIST YET. TASTE
DECAY THAT--"

"YOU WILL UNDERSTAND
THROUGH EMPATHY..."

"SO MUCH PAIN...DECAY...
DEATH...IS JUST...THE
FLESH...TRANSFORMING??
--NO!!!"



MAKE IT
STOP!!
TAKE THE
PAIN
AWAY!!!
TAKE...
IT...
AWAY!!!



MAKE
IT STOP!!!



TO UNDER-
STAND THE
FLESH,
YOU MUST
PASS
BEYOND
THE
FLESH.

MELD WITH
THE NEW
ORDER THAT
IS DECREED
BY OUR
LORD
LEVIATHON.

LORD LEVIATHAN'S
POWER WILL REMAKE YOUR
IMPURE FORM, REALIGN
THE CHAOS OF THE
FLESH.



"SHOW LIFE REMADE
ANEW BY HIS EXAMPLE."



"TO TRULY UNDERSTAND ART
THE ARTIST MUST RESTRUCTURE
THE WORLD AND HIMSELF
THROUGH HIS WORK ..."



"TRANSFORM THROUGH
HIS WORK ..."



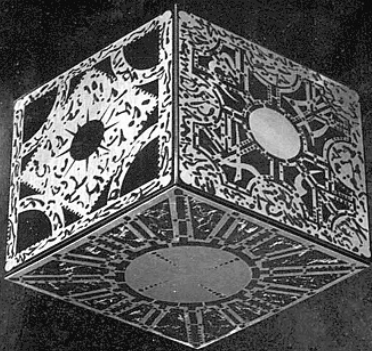
DAVIS! DAVIS!
WHERE ARE YOU?



"The secret of life is to appreciate the pleasure
of being terribly deceived ..."
- OSCAR WILDE.



The End





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Behind prison walls, a hellish box offers freedom—
at a price. Nerves unfeeling, a leper seeks
new sensations with the Cenobites. The limits of
pain probed by computer. At damnation's
heart, a writer's perfect work requires...changes.
A gallery hangs canvasses stretched skin
tight and painted in red.

These are pieces eager to slip into their place in the
puzzle, throwing wide the door to hell and
setting loose five all new tales sprung from the dark
and deadly universe of Clive Barker.

